

How can I help?

Thank you for your care and compassion to learn about pregnancy and infant loss, its impact on parents and how you can support them through their devastation.

Parents have a need to feel supported, whether they experienced the loss of their baby at 8 weeks or full term. Allowing parents to openly grieve and speak of their baby will make a positive difference in their healing.

We have provided you with some insight as to how to support parents during the very early days as well as for the time ahead.

A parent's dream...

Once a baby is discovered to be developing inside a mother's womb, dreams and hopes begin for a future with that baby. In a lot of instances, dreams and hopes for a baby begin long before conception.

An emotional and physiological relationship begins and continues as the unborn baby's presence becomes more apparent. Parents read about their baby's development, think of names, talk and fantasize about their growing baby leading up to their due date.

Their excitement increases as they shop for maternity clothes and baby clothes, wonder if it will be a boy or girl, and plan for the future when their baby comes home. With an impending birth, parents begin to define themselves by their parental role. Their baby is integral to their future.

Then, all of a sudden, their baby dies. A tiny life, but still a life and your friend's heartbreak is immeasurable. They will never see their hopes and dreams realised for this little one. Part of their future has now died and it can be extremely difficult for parents to come to terms with this. This journey of grief is compulsory for them and they now need to find a way to get through each hour and day without their baby.

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of hope**[®]

Pregnancy & Infant Loss Support



Bears of Hope offer support and guidance for parents who experience the loss of their baby during pregnancy, birth or infancy. This includes miscarriage, genetic interruption, stillbirth, multiple loss, neonatal and infant loss.

Through donating a Bear of Hope, parents are provided with the comfort of knowing they're not alone from the very beginning, and offered significant ongoing support to heal their broken hearts.

If you would like to receive more information about pregnancy and infant loss contact us today:



Toni Tattis – phone. 0400 475 012

In loving memory of ~my seven angels~

Amanda Bowles – phone. 0439 643 203

In loving memory of ~Jesse Buttons~

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Support and guidance for family and friends after the loss of a baby.



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Pregnancy & Infant Loss Support

Early support



Be there

Grieving parents find comfort in knowing that others are thinking of them, are there for them and that their baby is in the hearts of their family and friends too. Please let them know you are there through a phone call, card, email or visit. Acknowledgement of their loss is important to parents and not making any form of contact or recognition of their loss comes across as not caring.

Listen without judgment

Parents need to feel they can speak freely of their baby without being judged of their thoughts, feelings or of the gestational age of their baby. A parent's love for their baby cannot be measured by how long they carried their baby for. The stronger the attachment with their baby, the deeper the pain will be felt and expressed.

Parents may need to revisit the death of their baby over and over again. Acknowledge their feelings, listen and provide a trusting, open and caring environment for this to happen. Parents need a good listener for them to be able to process their grief and move forward.

Initiating a conversation

You may be feeling quite anxious about initiating conversations with your friend since their loss. Please take the time to think about what you would like to say and how you may respond. Please don't avoid the subject of their loss.

- *"I am so sorry for your loss of (baby's name). I just don't know what to say or do but know that I care about you and am thinking of you."*
- *"Can I come over and help you with (activity) today?"* (Be specific with help rather than just asking if they would like help in general).
- *"How are you really feeling today?"*
- *"I am here if you would like to talk about (baby's name)."*

Avoid clichés and unhelpful comments

- *"You will have another baby."*
Remember that they loved and wanted THIS baby.
- *"At least you have other children."*
- *"Everything happens for a reason."*
- *"It wasn't meant to be."*
- *"Sometimes these things happen for the best."*
- *"At least you weren't farther along."*
- *"At least you can get pregnant."*
- *"Everything will be fine next time."*
- *"The baby would have been deformed anyway."*

Speak of their baby's name

Parents need to hear their baby's name spoken. The acknowledgement that their baby existed, not just died, is very important, and using their baby's name is like music to their ears.

Offer practical help

There are many ways you can offer practical support, especially in the early weeks and months when their feelings of shock and grief are so acute. Run errands, offer to do house work, offer to help with any funeral/memorial arrangements, cook meals, keep the yard tidy, take their other children for a break, feed and exercise the pet, pick up some groceries.

Do not offer to pack their baby's things away. Parent's will do this and need to do this as a part of saying goodbye.

He lost his baby too

Dads are grieving the loss of their baby too. Father's can often be overlooked as they appear to be *strong* and *doing well*. Their need to get on with things does not reflect a lack of emotion; rather it is their way of coping. It's important to ask fathers how they are feeling too, to include them in on conversations, give them a hug, let him know you are also there for him, go for a game of golf or something active to show your support.

Other babies and pregnancies

For many parents, they are not capable of seeing or being around pregnant women and babies for some time. It's extremely painful to face and a clear reminder of what they don't have. Parents may distance themselves from these friends or family members until they feel they are ready. Parents need to put themselves first during this time. It is also important to be sensitive to sharing news of new pregnancies or births, this news can really hurt those still deep in their grief.

Understand emotions change

When parents appear to be having a "good" day, this doesn't mean their grief is over. On the other hand, if they have a really bad day, it doesn't mean that your friend needs psychological help either.

Parents need time and both parents will grieve differently from each other. Their lives have been completely shattered so it's needless to expect them to know how to cope with this. Grieving and healing for parents will take time and requires patience and respect from friends and family.

Ongoing support



Special dates and anniversaries

The first year can be a very difficult year for parents. They will experience many firsts without their baby. Parents never forget their baby and often there is a resurgence of grief during this time. Letting your friend know you are there and thinking of them on their baby's birthday, not only for the first year but consecutive years, is very comforting to know that you have not forgotten either. A small gesture with a card, flowers, visit to the cemetery, or gift is truly appreciated more than words can say. The lead up to special dates can also be very difficult for parents.

Check in

There is no time limit to grieving your own child. It takes time to re-adjust to life again. A supportive friend will check in and see how they're feeling, particularly after the first few months when reality is really sinking in and life for everybody else appears to have moved on. Don't assume that parents forget about their loss. It only takes a quick phone call or visit to see how they are travelling and to show that you care. It's also important to do this over an ongoing period to gauge if depression may be lingering.

A subsequent pregnancy

Falling pregnant again or having a healthy baby after their loss will never replace the pain and love that parents have for their previous baby. Another child does not mean that parents stop grieving or forget about their baby. Parents will often feel quite anxious with this new pregnancy as they have experienced firsthand that not all survive. Their grief may also intensify, especially nearing milestones of their prior loss. Family and friends can support them by continuing to be there and not dismiss their fears about their current pregnancy. Bringing home a healthy baby is a true miracle and bereaved parents understand this all too well.

Grief and its impact

Grief changes people. Some parents are not the same person as they were before they lost their baby and never will be. Please don't expect that same person to come back or for them to get over their loss. Expecting them to move on within a certain timeframe is unrealistic, unhelpful and inconsiderate.

Many parents can be traumatized by their loss and lose all sense of what "normal" felt like. Parents can become disengaged from life, lose passion in their previous interests and struggle to find themselves again.

Grief can put pressure on relationships, the ability to work, and the emotional capability of the individual. Parents will move beyond their sadness in their own time, developing new thoughts, beliefs, dreams and aspirations and all this is very normal.

Depression

Mental Illness is on the rise in Australia and depression is certainly something that is real but not well understood or recognized. The symptoms and their severity may be different for each person but parents who experience the loss of their own child are at risk for developing depression. If you feel your friend may be displaying symptoms of depression please encourage them to get help, or make an appointment for them to see their local doctor.

Support Services

There are many different support services available for parents, family and friends. If you feel you or your friend may be in need of further support please refer to our website for Bears of Hope support groups and services.

Most importantly, take care of yourself too.

Gifts

Many parents find comfort in being surrounded by keepsakes of their baby, or just to have their baby acknowledged and honoured.

Online Bears of Hope Drive

<http://bearsofhope.gofundraise.com.au>

This is an opportunity for you to support your family/friends. All money raised goes towards donating bears of hope to a hospital in honour of your friend's baby.

Baby Loss Memorial

<http://inhonour.gofundraise.com.au>

This is an opportunity for you to honour a special baby. All money raised goes towards assisting Bears of Hopes in its mission.

Make a Donation

All donations \$2 and over are tax deductible and are utilized towards the objectives of our charity. Please visit our website to make a one off donation.